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FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0725
INFO RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 2013
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 9049
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU PRIORITY 7287
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RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY 0024
RUEHSM/AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM PRIORITY 0686
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 4262
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI PRIORITY 9612
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI PRIORITY 6906
RUEHON/AMCONSUL TORONTO PRIORITY 1360
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 3809
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 COLOMBO 001012

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/INSB

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/03/2019

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SUBJECT: THE MALDIVES AGREES TO ACCEPT FIVE UIGHUR DETAINEES

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Classified By: AMBASSADOR Patricia A. Butenis. REASONS: 1.4 (B, D)

11. (C) SUMMARY. On October 27, Ambassador Daniel Fried, Special Envoy for Guantanamo Closure, held meetings with senior officials from the Government of the Republic of the Maldives (GORM) to discuss the possibility of the GORM accepting five ethnic Uighur detainees from Guantanamo Bay. Following Fried's meetings with the Minister of Home Affairs and the President, Maldivian Foreign Minister Shaheed informed Fried that the GORM would in principle be willing to accept the five Uighur detainees on a long-term temporary basis.⁸ (Note: Strictly protect - President Nasheed will announce this decision in early November, and the U.S. has agreed not to discuss this publicly until he has done so. End Note.) President Nasheed cited a strong desire to help President Obama close down the detention facilities at Guantanamo Bay as one of his primary motivations for accepting the Uighurs. He also wanted to show that the GORM and the Maldivian people were champions of human rights and willing to assist fellow Muslims who were in need; additionally, the GORM believed it was important to show it was a friend of the U.S. While recognizing that other bilateral issues were not linked to the matter of Guantanamo detainees, FM Shaheed outlined several points where he hoped the GORM could work closely with the U.S. to address challenges facing the Maldives. Post will report more fully on these via septel. End Summary.

MEETING WITH PRESIDENT NASHEED

12. (C) On October 27, Ambassador Fried, S/GC officer Brock Johnson, and Embassy Colombo officer Nate Jones met with President Nasheed, who was accompanied by Vice-President Waheed and Foreign Minister Shaheed. The president explained that the GORM was a very new democracy, and the political parties and politicians were still learning how to function effectively under the new conditions. Because of this,

should the Maldives decide to accept the detainees, he would need to package the decision well and make a public case to his people. President Nasheed said he and his cabinet would seriously consider this request because they wanted very much to help President Obama in his efforts to close down the Guantanamo Bay detainee facility.

13. (C) The president also took the opportunity to discuss overall U.S.-Maldives relations. He emphasized that though many countries had offered assistance to help the GORM consolidate its new democracy, only India had actually come through by giving some USD 100 million in aid. He mentioned the recent lack of movement on the GORM request for IMF assistance, and said he wanted to be able to show to his people that they had good relations with the U.S. Noting that the issue of GTMO detainees was not connected with any other bilateral issue, Fried said he knew Assistant Secretary Blake was actively pursuing the planned Maldives donor conference, to coordinate assistance to the Maldives among its friends. The president pointed out that his government was nearing its one-year anniversary, and would have to give a report card to the Maldivian people. President Nasheed estimated his current grade at only a C, and he had hoped to give himself at least a B. The president said there were many good reasons for the U.S. and others to support the Maldives, and that he and his fellow citizens had undertaken all these recent reforms not because others had asked them to, but because they wanted the country to go in the right direction.

MEETING WITH MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS

14. (C) Mohamed Shihab, Minister of Home Affairs, confirmed

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that his ministry was reviewing the dossiers of five Uighur detainees and highlighted several concerns/questions he had about accepting the detainees, including what could be done with them if they violated local laws. Ambassador Fried replied that these Uighurs would be subject to Maldivian law just as anyone else living there would be. Fried said the U.S. would not wash its hands of these persons once they had arrived in the Maldives, but he reassured Shihab that these detainees had been motivated by Uighur nationalist sentiment far more than anything else, and that their only desire now was to get out of Guantanamo Bay and lead normal lives. Fried noted that the Uighurs who have been resettled in Albania and Bermuda have jobs and are engaged in the community; they have not gotten into legal or other trouble. Shihab stated that he did not foresee finding jobs for the resettled men to be problematic. Fried said the U.S. would understand that the path to Maldivian citizenship might be difficult, and the U.S. would not insist on commitments in this regard. In fact, the U.S. was willing to look at longer term resettlement options (e.g., in Australia or a European country with Uighur populations) once some time had passed. Although he seemed to appreciate this clarification, Shihab did say that in a few past cases, foreign nationals who lived in the Maldives for a very long time and married locals had actually been granted citizenship. Fried said that this was also a viable possibility for the Uighurs.

MEETING WITH FOREIGN MINISTER SHAHEED

15. (C) Foreign Minister Shaheed informed Ambassador Fried at the end of the day that President Nasheed had convened his cabinet after the morning meeting and that the cabinet had decided that the GORM would accept the detainees. He said that President Nasheed would make an announcement in early November, possibly by the end of the first week of November, and would give three reasons why he was helping: first, to assist President Obama in his efforts to close Guantanamo Bay; second, to uphold human rights, and assist these Uighur men, their Muslim brothers; and third, they would do this to show to the U.S. that the people of the Maldives were their

friends. Shaheed said he would need to speak with Assistant Secretary Blake before President Nasheed's announcements, but that the cabinet had given its consent, virtually ensuring that it would happen. Fried warned Shaheed there would likely be heavy press coverage once the news was out, and Shaheed said they would announce that they had been pursuing better relations with the U.S. since coming into office, and this issue came up in the process of discussions.

Shaheed gave his consent when asked by Fried if he should mention this decision to the Government of the United Arab Emirates on his way back to Washington. When asked by Shaheed about the logistics of the transfer and how much assistance the U.S. would provide, Fried replied that other countries had received anywhere from USD 25,000 to USD 85,000 per detainee to cover temporary living expenses and other costs, and that the GORM should plan on the higher side of this range. Fried said that the GORM should plan to keep an eye on the men, as much to ensure their own well-being as anything. He said he would inform President Obama and Secretary Clinton of this decision. Fried asked if the detainees could be transferred as early as the end of December, and Shaheed replied that this wouldn't be a problem.

16. (C) FM Shaheed separately asked Ambassador Fried to pass along three requests to Assistant Secretary Blake when he returned to Washington. First, the GORM hoped the upcoming donors conference would go well, and they hoped to be able to tell the Maldivian people that the U.S. would be a very strong supporter of them in that conference. Second, the GORM hoped that the U.S. would encourage the IMF staff to

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proceed with consideration of their assistance request. Third, the GORM would appreciate assistance from the U.S. in combating corruption, working in concert with a project already begun through the World Bank. Shaheed went on to mention the ongoing discussions about restoring GSP status for the Maldives, and expansion of defense cooperation between the U.S. and the GORM. (Note: Post will report on these issues and options for cooperative efforts via septel. End Note.) Fried replied that while there was of course no linkage between these issues and his own work, he would certainly pass these points on to Assistant Secretary Blake. He mentioned his own past work with emerging democracies in the former Communist bloc, and said he would make sure that President Obama knew not only of this decision on the detainees, but also more about the recent democratic developments in the Maldives, and the great story which had developed there.
BUTENIS